

**MINUTES SPECIAL SELECT BOARD MEETING
5:00 P.M. WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2024
MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3RD FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM**

Select Board

Eric Remick, Chair
Ceilidh Galloway-Kane
Elizabeth Dow
Shari Cornish
Danny Hale

Others Present

David Upson, Town Manager
Casey Rowell, Business Manager
Monique Brochu
Dave Silberman, *Zoom*

Others Present

Special Meeting

5:02 P.M. – Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, called the meeting to order.

5:02 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda - *none*

5:02 P.M. – Communication from the audience - *none*

5:02 P.M. – 5:03 P.M. Select Board to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of January 4, 2024

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Select Board meeting of January 4, 2024.

5:03 P.M. – 5:35 P.M. Item #1 Business Manager to recap the FY25 proposed budget for Select Board feedback and changes followed by Select Board considering approval for presentation to voters – *Action needed.*

At the previous meeting, the Board discussed making changes to the capital equipment schedule in order to reduce the amount of funds we set aside for equipment. At this point, reducing capital is really the only place we can make cuts to lower the overall budget. It was decided to move out the replacement of Truck #4 by one year. In addition, we are moving out the police cruisers by 1 year - there will not be a cruiser purchased in FY25.

Elizabeth joined the meeting at 5:07 P.M.

There was also discussion about the grader and loader replacement scheduled for 15 years out at an estimated \$550,000. We decided to take that out of the schedule so we are not reserving for that way ahead of time and we can plan to finance that equipment just like we are now and budget the annual payments when the time comes. Furthermore, the current loan is for 10 years, and we expect to keep the equipment for 15 years, so we would have a few years to save up some money for a down payment if we wanted.

Another topic of discussion was the F250 and the F150 and that we have them on a 7-year replacement schedule. Danny indicated that in the past, we never had these on a schedule. They were just run until they died. There is

concern that trucks do not last like they used to and the F250 has done a fair amount of plowing in the village. Ultimately, it was decided to keep them on the schedule but go out eight years instead of seven for the F-250 and ten years for the F-150. If we find that we can get longer than 8 years out of them, we will keep them and replace them only when needed.

The reduction in capital equipment set aside reduces the overall budget increase from 9.96% proposed at the last meeting to the current 7.55%. While it is higher than we would like, we have done all we could to get it down to a reasonable figure. When we first started on the budget, we were around 13%, so we have come down significantly.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Danny Hale, the Select Board voted to approve the FY25 proposed budget of \$4,018,083 to present to the voters at Town meeting.

5:35 P.M. – 5:45 P.M. Item #2 Select Board to consider approving three cannabis licenses (1 new and two renewals)

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the renewals for Indoor Cultivator Tier 1 licenses for VTegridy Farms and Naked Hemp.

Monique Brochu was present to discuss her request for a new retailer license. Her attorney, David Silberman, was also present. Eric asked Mr. Silberman why this location is not considered to be within 500' of the schools. He explained that the rule was written to say 500' AND an abutting property, instead of saying "or." Therefore, this location does not violate that rule.

The Town Manager mentioned that in the past there have been complaints about people hanging out smoking tobacco and cannabis in the front of that building and he does not want to see that become a problem for the business owner. Monique asked for that data to be shared with her so she can ensure that there is not an increase in these complaints once she opens. She anticipates opening sometime in February, but possibly not until March.

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the Retailer cannabis license for Mill 47 LLC d/b/a/ The Cannabis Shop.

5:45 P.M. – 5:49 P.M. Item #3 Select Board to review and approve the bids for the Town House accessibility project – *Action needed*

After extending the bid deadline, only one bid was received from Ruggco. NEKarts is paying for this project with grants and private fundraising efforts, plus the \$50,000 of ARPA funds awarded to the project by the Town. The Project Manager, Jamie Milholland, will prepare a contract with the contractor and the Town because the Town owns the building. The Town already has a contract with Jamie.

Upon motion by Danny Hale, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to accept the bid from Ruggco in the amount of \$281,521.00.

Select Board Reports: Eric mentioned that the Yellow Barn accelerator building is large. Check it out if you have not seen it! There was brief discussion about a recent accident where a driver ran into the back of a forklift. The group collectively agreed that the building really changes the view of the Yellow Barn when you first come into town. It might be nice to paint a mural on the side of the barn at some point.

Shari mentioned that there are new winter banners hanging in the village. She also shared that The Hardwick Downtown Partnership is working on a contract with the new Executive Director. They have hired Jan Mueller, and he starts February 1.

Elizabeth shared that the first edition of the Hardwick Gazette came out today. She reported that there is no set fee, but donations are appreciated. They are a non-profit entity now. If your email was on file, then you should have received the paper. If you subscribe (at no cost) or donate, you will receive the weekly paper. They are hoping to go back to print editions at some point, but the costs are astronomical.

New Business: Eric brought up that the water runoff for Church St. was rerouted to North Main St. and mentioned that maybe the water runoff near the rescue building could be routed to Maple Street to a catch basin. David explained that it has to go under the rail trail, so it is not as simple as we wish it were.

There was discussion about federal aid being available in the future for projects like these.

Old Business: Eric mentioned meter pits – would be great if we could get the unmetered done this summer. David agreed but that we should look at putting this project out to bid.

Danny inquired about a road schedule we used to have for back road improvements. David said that the grant-in-aid funds are what are use for these repairs annually. David said that Tom has a plan for the next projects using the grant-in-aid funds.

Shari mentioned that not long ago, there was a discussion by the Board to create some sort of policy or procedure for how the town would convey property and/or list properties the Town owns. She mentioned that someone is interested in the small parking area on the corner by the Clip Joint. As a starting point, we should get a value from our assessor about the potential value of the lot. David will ask the assessor about that lot value and Carey Rd. too.

6:08 P.M. Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, adjourned the meeting.

Minutes taken by: _____
Casey Rowell, Business Manager

Minutes approved by: _____
Eric Remick, Select Board Chair